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ABSTRACT

Data on the status of education for immigrant amnesty applicants in California under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) are summarized. The amnesty applicants fall into two categories: immigrants who can prove continuous U.S. residency before 1982, and "special agricultural workers" who qualify if they worked in agricultural jobs for at least 90 days between May 1985 and May 1986. The information reported includes: background on the federal law's education requirements, California IRCA education program funding, and state program goals; projected and annual enrollment by year (1987-88, 1988-89, 1989-90, and 1990-91) and by applicant category; education service provider types (adult schools, community-based organizations, and community colleges) and percentages; the functions of the state data management and reporting system; a demographic profile of students, including age, gender, distribution by geographic area, and employment patterns; student educational background and literacy; IRCA pre-enrollment appraisal procedures and results for listening and reading skills; program participation patterns; and pre- and post-program achievement test results for a subsample of participants. Data are displayed in graphs and charts, and highlights are presented in narrative form. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education) (MSE)

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Three Years of Amnesty Education in California

IRCA Pre-Enrollment Appraisal Results for New Californians

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Prepared for the

California Department of Education

Amnesty Education Office

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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CASAS Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System

1992

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REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Introduction

Over three million people applied for amnesty nationwide, and more than half of the nation's applicants (1.6 million) were from California. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 provided a one-time opportunity for people who had been living in the United States illegally to obtain legal resident status and eventually qualify for citizenship.

There were two types of applicants:

- "Pre-82s," who could prove they had resided continuously in the United States since before 1982; and
- Special Agricultural Workers ("SAWs"), who qualified if they had worked in agricultural jobs for at least 90 days between May 1985 and May 1986.

The Education Requirement

To achieve permanent resident status, Pre-82s were required to demonstrate that they (1) had a minimal understanding of English and U.S. History, or (2) were "satisfactorily pursuing" a course of study (at least 40 hours of a 60-hour course).

SAWs were exempt from this educational requirement, but in California and many other states they were permitted and encouraged to attend amnesty education classes.

Funding

Congress appropriated four billion dollars in State Legalization Assistance Grant (SLIAG) funds for the four-year period beginning in 1987. California's share was $1.7 billion, but within California, only $354 million was designated for education, a relatively low allocation for education compared to other highly impacted states.

Under IRCA, federal funding in the form of SLIAG grants was mandated. Each state was required to allocate 30 percent of its grant to education, public health, and public assistance (10% each); the remaining 70 percent was allocated at the discretion of individual states.

Program Goals

Funds were awarded by the California Department of Education (CDE) to education providers based on their ability to meet two major goals in the following order of priority: 1) to serve those needing a Certificate of Satisfactory Pursuit for completion of 40 hours of instruction to fulfill legalization requirements; and 2) to make available education and training that would enable them to succeed in school, become more employable, and otherwise realize their full potential as citizens of the United States. (California State Plan, 1987)

The first goal has been largely met; however, there remain approximately 100,000 Pre-82s still in need of a Certificate. (CDE) Education beyond the minimum 40-hour requirement is necessary to meet the second goal.

Enrollment

The amnesty education population had a strong impact on the adult education system in California, doubling statewide enrollment in ESL/Citizenship classes, and increasing the entire adult education enrollment by one-third. (CDE)

After four years of service, actual enrollment figures far exceeded the estimates in the California State Plan: more than one million amnesty students were served from 1987-1991. (See Table 1.) (CDE)

Table 1
Projected and Actual Enrollment by Year

	87-88	88-89	89-90	90-91
Original CDE projection	— 900,000 over a three-year period —			
Revised State Plan projection	81,648	190,512	272,160	—
Actual enrollment by year	86,747	664,100	359,788	237,842

California Department of Education, Transition Plan, 1991

The peak year for amnesty enrollment was 1988-89. After that, due to substantial fiscal and program restraints at the federal and state levels, student enrollment fluctuated, even though there was continuing demand for services. In the history of this program, there has never been a match between funding and the demand for services. In addition, many agencies have reported that amnesty students are actually being served in non-amnesty education programs, but they cannot be claimed or counted because they are not identifying themselves as amnesty students. (CDE)

In the three-year period from 1988-1991, the percentage of SAW enrollment increased while the percentage of Pre-82 enrollment decreased. (See Table 2.)

Table 2
Pre-82 vs. SAW Enrollment by Year

	Pre-82	SAW
87–88	— No available data —	
88–89	83%	17%
89–90	81%	19%
90–91	71%	29%

California Department of Education, Transition Plan, 1991

Education Service Providers

The service delivery system for amnesty education in California was unique. More than 200 adult education agencies representing three types of service providers participated: adult schools, community-based organizations, and community colleges.

- Adult schools served the greatest number of students, followed by community-based organizations, and community colleges. (See Table 3.) (CDE)

Table 3
Enrollment by Provider Type

—	87–88	88–89	89–90	90–91
Adult Schools	92%	68%	50%	44%
Community-Based Organizations	6%	20%	34%	43%
Community Colleges	2%	12%	16%	13%

California Department of Education, Transition Plan, 1991

- Amnesty enrollment in community-based organizations increased over time, which may have been the result of an emphasis on outreach activities and, in some cases, complete reliance on SLIAG funds to provide amnesty classes.
- Community college enrollment was fairly consistent over the three-year period from 1988 to 1991.

California's Data Management and Reporting System

The mission of the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) in relation to this program was to implement a statewide data management and reporting system. This system:

- documents student eligibility, background, and English language proficiency for program placement; and
- provides data to project educational need.

The CASAS amnesty education database is the largest adult literacy database in the nation, with more than half a million records (568,899) from three state fiscal years (October 1988–June 1991).

Program and fiscal constraints prevented agencies from testing all students; however, this database contains a substantial and impressive number of student records. It is representative of the statewide enrollment in amnesty programs with respect to geographic region and provider type, but not with respect to Pre-82s and SAWs. There were proportionally more SAW Pre-Enrollment Appraisal student records received from amnesty providers in each succeeding year as compared to CDE enrollment figures.

The following provides a demographic profile and assessment results from this database.

Demographic Profile

- Almost all students were of Hispanic origin (99%) and spoke Spanish as their native language.
- The country of citizenship for most students was Mexico (88%) with El Salvador (7%) and Guatemala (3%) also represented.
- The SAWs were much younger than the Pre-82s: 66 percent of the SAWs were in their teens or twenties.
- Sixty-eight percent of the Pre-82s were married. SAWs were less likely to be married (43%). (CASAS Survey, 1989)
- Within the entire Appraisal population, approximately 60 percent were male. Among the Pre-82s, men and women were represented almost equally (54% and 46% respectively), but SAWs were predominantly male (79%), perhaps because they had qualified for amnesty as farmworkers who were either single or unable to bring their families with them to the United States. (See Figure 1.)

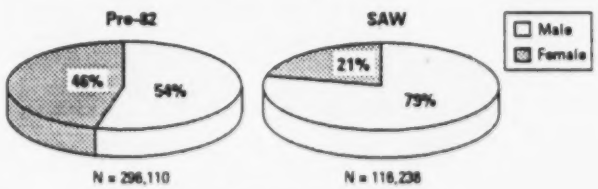

Figure 1. Gender: Pre-82 vs. SAW

- More than half of the Pre-82s (64%) were concentrated in the greater Los Angeles area. There was a more equal distribution of SAWs statewide, although 38 percent lived in the greater Los Angeles area. (See Table 4.)

Table 4
Distribution by Geographic Area

	Pre-82	SAW
LA County	58%	20%
LA Perimeter	6%	18%
San Diego County	18%	26%
Bay Area	7%	5%
Central Valley	4%	10%
Balance of State	7%	21%
	N = 303,120	N = 119,601

- According to the CASAS Survey conducted in 1989, the majority of the amnesty education population reported that they were working full-time (85%). Most were employed in entry-level or unskilled jobs requiring limited English skills.
- By 1989-90, most of the SAWs had left agriculture (67%) and almost all Pre-82s were no longer agricultural workers (91%). (CASAS Survey)
- The CASAS Survey also found that very few were on any type of public assistance.

Educational Background

The amnesty population is extremely undereducated.

- The mean number of years of school completed in their native country was 5.6.
- About two-thirds (65%) of all students had attended six or fewer years of school in their native country. Twenty-eight percent had completed three or fewer years of school. These results indicate that more than one-third were not literate in their native language. (See Figure 2.)

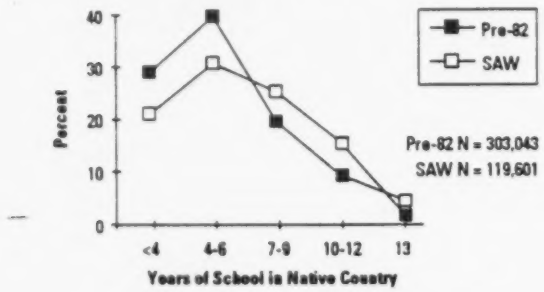

Figure 2. Years of School in Native Country

- SAWs had completed more years of school in their native country than Pre-82s, even though SAWs had qualified for amnesty as agricultural workers.
- Younger students had more years of education in their native country.

The IRCA Pre-Enrollment Appraisal

The IRCA Pre-Enrollment Appraisal was developed by CASAS to assess a person's ability to apply basic language skills in a functional context. Both listening and reading skills are measured. A score of 215 on the IRCA Pre-Enrollment Appraisal is the legislatively established literacy benchmark for this program.

Table 5
Interpreting CASAS Scores

< 200	Difficulty with basic survival tasks
200-214	Able to perform some basic survival tasks
215-224	Able to perform most survival tasks
225+	Able to perform in routine work and social situations. (High school entry level reading skills)

IRCA Pre-Enrollment Appraisal Results

Amnesty students were far less proficient in English than was previously assumed. Test results clearly demonstrate that most amnesty students would have difficulty functioning successfully in other than entry-level jobs, in most job training programs, and in the community.

- The mean IRCA reading appraisal score was 190 for all newly enrolling students from fall 1988 to June 1991.
- The mean IRCA listening appraisal score was 185.

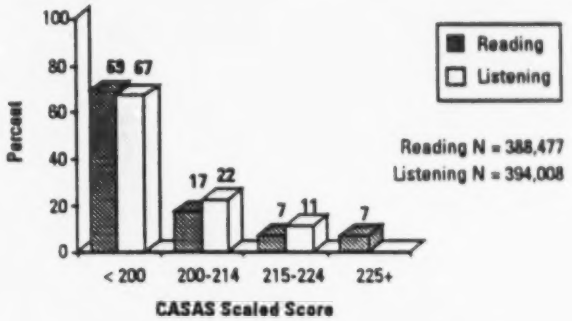

Figure 3. Reading and Listening Appraisal Results for New Enrollees

- Eighty-six percent scored below 215 in reading, and can be considered functionally illiterate in English. (See Figure 3.)
- Nearly 70 percent scored below 200 in reading or listening. They would have difficulty:
  - using the telephone
  - following simple oral or written instructions
  - reading basic job-related information
- Test score performance was nearly identical for Pre-82s and SAWs.
- Reading and listening test score performance were similar.
- Over the three-year period, there was very little change in the scores of newly enrolling students.

Other Appraisal Findings

- Older students had lower appraisal scores.
- The more years of school completed in the native country, the higher the appraisal score.
- Test scores were lowest in the Central Valley and highest in the Bay Area and the Los Angeles Perimeter.
- Newly enrolling students in community colleges scored highest in both reading and listening. (See Figure 4.)
- Newly enrolling students in community-based organizations scored lowest.

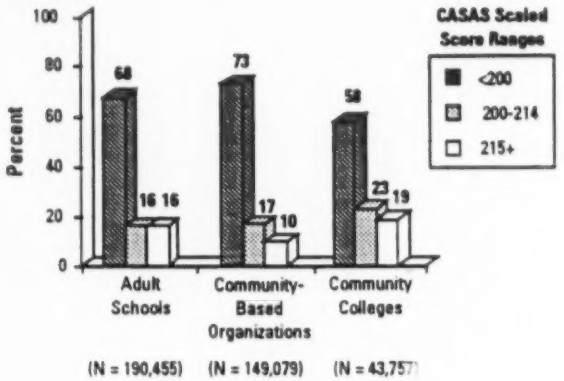

Figure 4. Reading Appraisal Results by Provider Type

Program Participation

A 1990-91 subsample of 7,870 amnesty students who attended Adult Basic Education (ABE)/English as a Second Language (ESL) programs that receive supplemental funding through Section 321 of the federal Adult Basic Education Act provides data that were not available from the Pre-Enrollment Appraisal. This amnesty subsample of the statewide sample will be referred to as the "321 Amnesty Subsample." Findings should be interpreted with the understanding that students in the 321 Amnesty Subsample were generally better educated and had better English skills when they enrolled than students in the entire Pre-Enrollment Appraisal sample. Also, adult schools served most of these amnesty students (77%); very few were served by community-based organizations (12%) or community colleges (10%). Some of the results in this section are drawn from the CASAS Survey of Newly Legalized Persons conducted in 1989 (N = 4,976).

- More than half were first-time users of educational services in the United States. (CASAS Survey)
- Almost all amnesty students expressed interest in attending future classes. (CASAS Survey)
- Approximately 80 percent intend to apply for citizenship (CASAS Survey)
- Although many Pre-82s were mandated to attend in order to fulfill their education requirement for legalization, most (79%) specified other reasons for enrolling. Most students enrolled to further their education or improve their job situation. (321 Amnesty Subsample) (See Figure 5.)

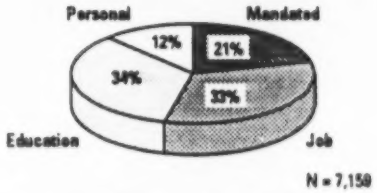

Figure 5. Reasons for Enrolling

- Most amnesty students (71%) attended classes in the evening for an average of 12 hours of class per week. (321 Amnesty Subsample)
- On the average, it took five weeks for students to complete 60 hours of instruction.
- Information about hours of instruction was collected for 55 percent (N = 4,350) of the amnesty students in the 1990–91 321 subsample. Of these, most (79%) stayed in programs longer than the required 40 hours, and at least 63 percent studied 100 hours or more. (321 Amnesty Subsample)
- Classes offered had an average of 26 participants. (321 Amnesty Subsample)
- More than half (51%) of these students were placed into pre-beginning or beginning level ESL classes. (321 Amnesty Subsample)
- In the 321 Amnesty Subsample, 39 percent continued in programs after an average of 100 hours of instruction. Of those who left and who reported a reason for leaving (N = 1,573), more than half (55%) had met their personal goals for enrolling.

Achievement Test Results

The following results are from the subsample of amnesty students enrolled in 321-funded ABE/ESL programs who were pre- and post-tested in reading in 1990-91 (N = 980). As noted above, this subsample was generally better educated and had substantially higher average reading pre-test scores (211) than students in the entire IRCA Pre-Enrollment Appraisal population (190). Eighty-eight percent of these students were served by adult schools.

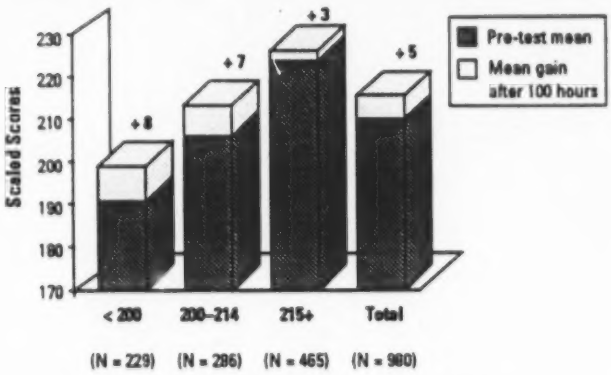

Figure 6. Pre/Post Reading Achievement Results

- Amnesty students gained an average of five points in reading after approximately 100 hours of instruction. (See Figure 6.)
- Amnesty students with the lowest pre-test scores made the greatest gains.
- The mean reading pre-test scores for amnesty students as compared to all ESL students in 321 programs were almost the same: 211 and 210, respectively, on the CASAS scale.
- Amnesty student reading gains (5 points) were slightly greater than for all ESL students in the statewide 321 sample (4 points).
- Available data suggest that amnesty students who were post-tested after fewer than 60 hours of instruction (N = 68) made smaller gains (an average of 2.5 points in reading), while those who were post-tested after approximately 100 hours achieved greater gains (5 points). This finding should be interpreted with caution since the number of cases of students who were post-tested after fewer than 60 hours is relatively small.

Summary

These are hopeful years for the amnesty population. Most are young, just getting started in life. They are building families and are committed to helping their children get a better education than they received. They are hardworking and highly motivated to improve their job skills.

> *"Our greatest obstacle is our greatest need: to learn English. There is discrimination, low pay, bad jobs for those who don't speak English."*
>
> — Immigrant Voices, CDE

The low test results presented in this report show that the amnesty population is in need of language instruction, and that they have clearly benefited from the instruction they have already received. Education is of great importance to this population to empower them as contributing residents and future citizens.